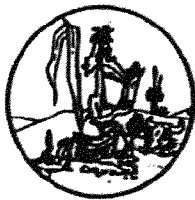


TORTUGAS

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Patrick H. Beckett
and
Terry L. Corbett



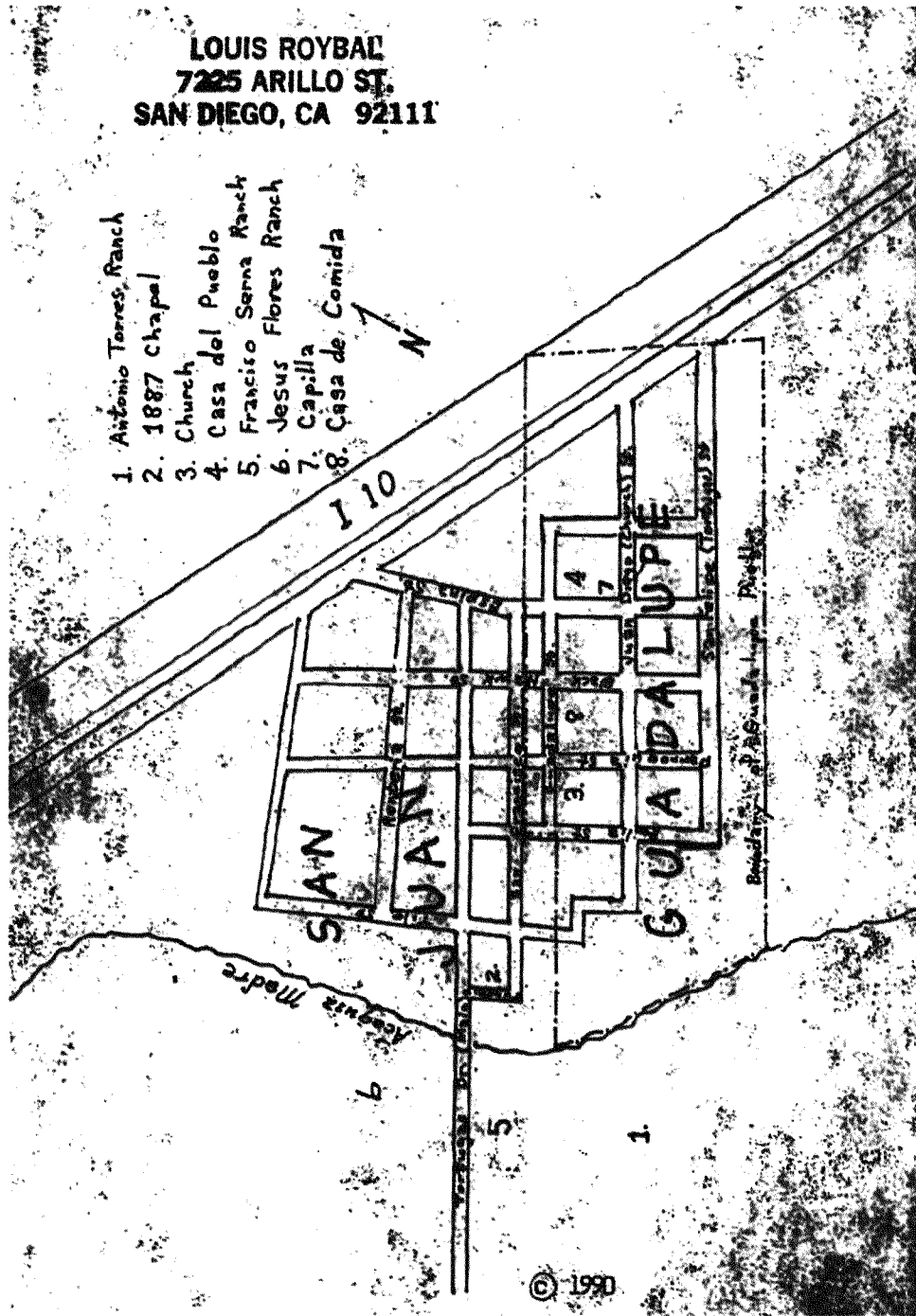
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MONOGRAPH NO. 8

1990

LOUIS ROYBAL
7225 ARILLO ST.
SAN DIEGO, CA 92111

1. Antonio Torres, Ranch
2. 1887 Chapel
3. Church
4. Casa del Pueblo
5. Francisco Serna Ranch
6. Jesus Flores Ranch
7. Capilla
8. Casa de Comida



Juan Diego Bernal
1223 AKERS
526-6425 Acknowledgments

As with all publications, past work and conversations with one's own peers and colleagues are always interwoven into new ideas and printed words. This publication is no different. The authors would like to thank the following individuals for their support, thoughts, and their constructive comments. The authors take full responsibility for the interpretations expressed in this document.

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To our colleague and good friend Mary Taylor, a warm thank you for your generous help and suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

Tortugas is a village located on the southern outskirts of Las Cruces, New Mexico. The culture and traditions of Tortugas are an amalgamation of the Hispanic and Indian customs of the El Paso area with more recently introduced ideas from the interior of Mexico. Although Tortugas is not an Indian pueblo, a number of its residents are descendants of the Mission Indians of the El Paso Valley. Many others, though not of Mission Indian descent, carry on the Indian traditions brought to the Mesilla Valley in the late 1800s. In particular, the corporation known as Los Indigenes de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe has been most effective in keeping alive the unique customs of Tortugas. This group also preserves the traditional Pueblo organization and officers.

Present day Tortugas is made up of two historically distinct villages: San Juan (the older) and Guadalupe. The name Tortugas first appears on Bvt. Captain Pope's 1854 map of the Mesilla Valley. Pope locates Tortugas just north of the Stevenson smelter and about four miles above Fort Fillmore which was established in 1851. Pope gives 1852 as the date the village of Tortugas was founded (Pope 1854). This date is substantiated by the 1854 preemption claim of Antonio Torres which states that he had been in possession of the land since 1852 (DACC 1854). This same property was later the John McGuire Ranch, located just west of the acequia madre and about 500 feet south of the road to Mesilla Park (DACAR). The fact that no village or permanent settlement existed at the site during the period between 1680 and 1850 is also supported by the lack of reference to such settlement in the journals of those who passed through the area. These include Otermin in 1682 (Hackett 1942), De Vargas in 1692 (Espinosa 1940), Rivera in 1728 (Rivera 1945), Crespo in 1730 (AAD 1730), Tameron in 1760 (AAD 1760), La Fora in 1768 (Kinnard 1950), Pike in 1807 (Pike 1895), Wislizenus in 1846 (Wislizenus 1848), and Bartlett in 1851 (Bartlett 1854).

The name San Juan appears on the Custer map of 1854-55 in the same location as Las Tortugas of the 1854 Pope map (Custer 1855). The village is listed as San Juan de Dios in the sacramental records of San Albino de la Mesilla during the 1850s. Early San Juan families listed in these records include Juan Armijo and his wife Maria Montoya, Francisco Serna and his wife Catarina Torres, and Rito Delfin and his wife Socorro Pena. Deed records indicate that other early San Juan settlers included: Lino and Rafaela Serna, Marcos and Eleuteria Garcia, Jesus and Guillerma Sandoval, Jose and Teodosia Garcia, and Victoriano and Ines Salvatierra. The Serna and Armijo families were from the Socorro, New Mexico region, and the Salvatierra family came from Janos in Northern Chihuahua (Corbett n.d.).

The land for the village of Guadalupe (adjacent to and south of San Juan) was obtained by petition to the Justice of the Peace in 1888. The petitioners stated that they had been in possession of the land for the last fifteen years (DACC 1888). This is apparently the same property mentioned in a newspaper article which indicated that the Pueblo Indians had caused a new townsite to be laid out at Tortugas where they would proceed to build thirty houses and a church (Rio Grande Republican 1888). On December 10, 1908, the Board of the Dona Ana Bend Colony Grant issued a deed of confirmation to the Commissioners of the Town of Guadalupe, thereby recognizing the 1888 claim (DACC 1908).

A HISTORY OF LOS INDIGENES DE GUADALUPE

The origins of Los Indigenes de Guadalupe of Tortugas can properly be understood only by turning back the pages of history to the 17th century. In 1630 the Mesilla Valley was inhabited by the Manso Indians. To their west and southwest lived their kin, the Janos and Jocomes. The Sumas occupied the country south of the Mansos. Beyond the Sumas were the Conchos and Chinarras. To the north the Piros inhabited the Rio Grande in the area of Socorro and San Marcial. To the east of the Piros, in the vicinity of Mountainair, were their cousins the Tompiros. In addition various Apache bands, relative newcomers to the region, lived in many of the mountains and valleys of the area (Benavides 1965:12-17). The Mansos, Janos and Jocomes spoke the same language (Forbes 1959:105). Circumstantial evidences suggests that these tribes may have spoken the same language as the Conchos and Chinarras (Beckett & Corbett n.d.). The Sumas spoke a different language (Griffen 1979:43). All of these nomadic tribes made a living by hunting and gathering, and lived in temporary crude brush shelters. The Piros and Tompiros were settled pueblo people. In culture and language they were similar to the Tiwas, their pueblo neighbors to the north. In the early 1600s The Spaniards established four missions among the Piro: San Luis de Sevilleta, Santa Ana de Alamillo, Nuestra Senora de Socorro and San Antonio de Senecu (Bandelier 1892:250).

In 1659 Fray Garcia de San Francisco from the mission of Senecu, New Mexico established the mission of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe at Paso del Norte (present site of Cd. Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico). The missionaries were assisted by several Piro Indians from the same village. Ten families of Piro Indians from the pueblo of Senecu del Norte were brought to Paso del Norte to help in the conversion of the Manso and Suma Indians of the area (Hughes 1914:308). Soon, the Franciscan missionaries and their Piro assistants had gathered many of the Mansos into the mission. Here they were joined by

some of the Suma, their neighbors to the south. The mission of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe de los Mansos del Paso del Norte was formally dedicated on January 15, 1668 (Scholes 1929:195). Two other missions were founded in the El Paso area between 1659 and 1680, San Francisco 12 leagues south of El Paso, and later La Soledad at Janos. These missions became the southernmost outposts of pre-revolt New Mexico (Scholes 1929:195-201).

From its beginning the Guadalupe Mission at Paso del Norte was a melting pot of the indigenous cultures of the area. Although founded primarily for the conversion of the Manso and Suma Indians, the mission from its start had a small and growing Piro presence.

During the 1670s drought and an ever increasing threat from the warlike Apache tribes forced the evacuation of the Salinas region in New Mexico. The Guadalupe Mission at Paso del Norte became a center for an increasing stream of Indian refugees. Records indicate that some of the Tompiro and Tiwa of the Salinas area sought refuge at the Guadalupe Mission (Scholes & Mera 1940:284). In 1675 the pueblo of Senecu del Norte was destroyed by the Apache. Some of the Piro survivors fled south to Paso del Norte (Bandelier 1892:250).

After almost a century of exploitation and abuse, the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico united in an outburst of fury which drove the Spaniards and their Indian allies out of northern New Mexico. The Great Pueblo Revolt of 1680 brought a flood of Hispanic and Christian Indian refugees to Paso del Norte (Hackett 1942:xxix).

In their retreat from northern New Mexico the Spaniards were joined by many of the Piro Indians from Sevilleta, Alamillo, Socorro and Senecu del Norte (Forbes 1960:181). Three hundred and seventeen (317) Indian allies arrived with the retreating Spanish colonists at the temporary camp of La Salineta in October of 1680 (Hackett 1942:cx). In 1682 three hundred and eighty five

(385) more Indians from Isleta del Norte were brought to the El Paso area by Governor Otermin when he failed to reconquer New Mexico (Hackett 1942:ccix).

Governor Otermin established four new pueblos to accommodate the new refugees. These pueblos were moved closer to Paso del Norte and reorganized in 1683 (Hughes 1914:328-29). Governor Cruzate moved the Spanish headquarters to Paso del Norte, where he also established a presidio (Hughes 1914:364).

The new Indian pueblos of the El Paso area were later described by Escalante in the following manner:

...two leagues more below Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe de El Paso, with Piro and Tompiro Indians, the pueblo of Senecu; a league and a half toward the east, with Tihuas [Tiwa] Indians, the pueblo of Corpus Christi de la Isleta ; twelve leagues from El Paso, and seven and a half from la Isleta, following the same Rio del Norte, with Piro Indians, a few Thanos [Tano], and some Gemex [Jemez], the third pueblo, with the appellation of Nuestra Senora del Socorro.
(Hughes 1914:323).

At least one Spanish family lived at each of these pueblos to aid and protect the priest (Hughes 1914:391).

Some unconverted Mansos, under the leadership of Captain Chiquito, remained in their old haunts (Forbes 1960:162). In 1684 many of the Mansos of the Guadalupe Mission joined their unconverted relatives in a revolt against Spanish rule. They were joined in this revolt by the Janos, Sumas and Chinarras. The Mansos and their allies had planned to surprise the Spaniards but their plot was revealed by some loyal Piro Indians. The Manso leaders were arrested, but many of the Christian Mansos of the Guadalupe Mission left Paso del Norte (Hughes 1914:348).

The rest of the 17th Century was a period of unrest and conflict at Paso del Norte. In 1691 some of the

Mansos who had participated in the 1684 revolt were resettled at the new mission of San Francisco de los Mansos, which was eight or nine leagues from Paso del Norte (Adams & Chavez 1956:260). This mission was probably in the southern part of the Mesilla Valley. After 1693 San Francisco de los Mansos ceased to be mentioned in known records (Chavez 1958:16).

In 1693 New Mexico was partially reconquered by Governor De Vargas, but many Indian and Hispanic refugees choose to remain in the El Paso area. In 1698 some Janos Indians were added to the Guadalupe Mission (Griffen 1979:).

At first the Manso and Piro communities were housed separately at the Guadalupe Mission (Rivera 1945:67). Both communities included individuals from other tribal groups. As time went by the number of Mission Indians decreased, and intermarriage among the different tribes gathered at the mission increased. Finally the two communities merged into one entity. This mixed group is identified tribally in a number of different ways in the 18th century, sometimes as Manso-Piro, or Piro-Tiwa, or as just Piro (Corbett n.d.). The common thread that held these people together was their identity with the Guadalupe Mission and its patroness.

From 1680 on the Pueblo Indians of the Guadalupe Mission lived under a Spanish government, intermixed with their Hispanic neighbors. During this period many customs and religious beliefs of both groups became intertwined and indistinguishable from each other.

In the mid 1800s The Mesilla Valley was opened to settlement. Among the settlers in the new towns were Indians from the Paso del Norte group (Bloom 1903:56). These people brought with them an intense devotion to Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, a devotion they shared with many of their Hispanic neighbors. As civil wars and political disturbances caused the situation in Mexico to deteriorate some traditional ceremonies, which had long been celebrated at the Guadalupe Mission, were shifted

north to Las Cruces. People from the declining Indian pueblos of the El Paso valley joined together in Las Cruces to maintain their Indian identity. The traditional dances, once performed before the ancient Guadalupe mission, were now given before Saint Genevieve's Church (*Rio Grande Republican* 1885).

A new group, Los Inditos de Las Cruces, emerged as heir to the cultural tradition of the Indians of the Guadalupe Mission. This group included the Jemente, Abalos, Roybal, and Trujillo families, Indians from the Guadalupe mission. Felipe Roybal, the nephew of the last cacique at Paso del Norte, became the cacique of the Las Cruces group. They were joined by other families from Senecu and Ysleta del Sur (Reynolds 1982:6). The Pedraza and Alejo families were from Senecu, the former Piro Pueblo located between Ysleta, Texas and Juarez, Mexico. The Duran, Gonzales, and Grijalva families all had Tiwa ancestors from Ysleta, Texas (Corbett n.d.). In 1888 this group obtained a parcel of land next to the already established village of San Juan de Dios, also known as Tortugas. Their intent was to build houses and a chapel on the site (*Rio Grande Republican* 1888; DACC 1889).

To build the chapel, they enlisted the aid of their neighbors in San Juan de Dios. Magdaleno Baca, an early San Juan resident, was one of the three commissioners listed on the 1888 Petition, the other two being Felipe Roybal and Jose Abuncio Trujillo (DACC 1888). A group of San Juan residents had obtained a parcel of land in 1887 on which they intended to erect a chapel, but it is not known if the chapel was ever constructed (Giles 1989:1). In 1896 the cooperation with San Juan was briefly interrupted when Los Inditos de Las Cruces obtained a lot in Las Cruces on which to build their chapel (DACC 1896). Construction began, but this chapel was never completed (*Las Cruces Citizen* 1902).

After the death of Felipe Roybal in 1906 (*Rio Grande Republican* 1906), plans to build the chapel shifted back to the Guadalupe area of Tortugas. Leadership of the

group passed to Francisca Abalos de Roybal and Eugene Van Patten. Dona Francisca became the *cacica regenta* and one of the commissioners of the Pueblo of Guadalupe. The other commissioners were Col. Eugene Van Patten, Victoriano Abalos and Bidal Minjares. Eugene Van Patten was the widower of Benita Madrid Vargas, a Piro Indian of the Guadalupe Mission. Victoriano Abalos was descended from Indians of the Guadalupe Mission. Bidal Minjares was an in-law of the Trujillo family, who were also from the Guadalupe Mission (Corbett n.d.).

In 1910 Los Inditos de Las Cruces moved their traditional Guadalupe Day ceremonies to Tortugas (*Las Cruces Citizen* 1910). On April 12, 1914 a nonprofit corporation named Los Indigenes de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe was formed. Its purposes included the construction and maintenance of community buildings, including a Catholic church and cemetery; improvement of lots and construction of homes; and the establishment of a governing set of officers who would be responsible for civil matters and the maintenance of religious ceremonies (DACC 1914a). Title to the Pueblo of Guadalupe was transferred to the corporation by the Commissioners of the Pueblo on September 14, 1914 (DACC 1914b).

The first officers of the Corporation were Eugene Van Patten, President; Francisca Avalos, Regenta Casica and Treasurer; Harry V. Jackson, Secretary; Zenobio Avalos, 1st Capitan; Cirildo Avalos, 2nd Capitan; Ignacio Herrera, 3rd Capitan; Jose Angel Enriquez, 4th Capitan; Merced Parra, 5th Capitan (DACR1 1914).

On October 26, 1914 the newly formed corporation deeded the chapel and grounds where the present church is located to the Bishop of Tucson (Giles 1989:4). In 1917 Rev. John Militello became the first pastor of the new parish which included both the pueblos of San Juan and Guadalupe (Giles 1989:6).

The Corporation was from its beginning of multi-ethnic composition, although a majority of the original members were of Mission Indian descent (Reynolds 1982:7). Many of those of Indian ancestry as well as other Corporation members continued to live in Las Cruces. During the 1940s a rift occurred between some of the members who were descendants of the Mission Indians of the El Paso Valley and the rest of the corporation (Hurt 1952:112). As a result of litigation a final break occurred in the 1960s. One group is now seeking Federal recognition as an Indian Tribe.

Over the years the customs and traditions of the Indigenes became a integral part of the village of Tortugas.

OTHER DANCE GROUPS

In 1921 a new dance group was introduced into Tortugas by Juan Pacheco, a recent immigrant from Zacatecas, Mexico (Hurt 1952:110). This group then split into two groups called the Aztecas del Carillo and the Guadalupeana Aztecas (Reynolds 1982:10).

THE FIESTA OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

A three-day ceremony from December 10-12 occurs every year honoring Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe). This is the major ceremony held in the village of Tortugas. Since every resident in the village is aware of the ceremony, it is a time in which relatives arrive from all over the United States to pay tribute to their sacred patron, Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, and to socialize with their relatives.

On the evening of December 10th, after weeks of preparation the image of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, dressed in a distinctive manner by this year's mayordomos (sponsors), is carried from its normal resting place in La Capilla (little chapel) to La Casa del Pueblo (community house) by four couples of mayordomos (two couples from this year and two couples of mayordomos for the

following year). During the entire candlelight procession, Los Danzantes dance before the image. The completion of the procession marks the start of the novena in honor of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe. The allnight prayers are interrupted only by Danzantes dancing every hour or so. Two men with shotguns stand outside the doors of La Casa del Pueblo to signal changes in the ceremony by shotgun blasts, which serve to ward off evil spirits.

La Alba (Dawn Ceremony) begins on the following morning (5a.m., December 11) with the image of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe being carried in procession led by the Danzantes from La Casa del Pueblo to the church sanctuary. This signals the end of the novena.

Registration for the climb up Tortuga (b)(6) then takes place in La Casa del Pueblo. It is customary for a small donation to be made at the registration table. After registration the participants walk in procession to the church for a short mass. The procession then leaves the church and is joined by new arrivals on the east side of La Casa del Pueblo. The *Capitan de la Guerra* (1st War Captain) then issues the instructions for the upcoming journey.

The (b)(6) journey to the mountain is led by the captains. In front of the captains two men carry a small image of the Virgin. The participants are traditionally lined up *dos y dos* (two by two) behind the Captains, with two rows of women on the north side (left) of the procession and two rows of men on the south side. On the return journey from the mountain the order is reversed so that the men are always on the right side of the women. A small number of individuals chose to walk up the mountain and back barefoot. Most of these devout souls leave earlier as the going is slower with bare feet. The procession often passes many of these pious individuals.

At the base of (b)(6) brush is gathered and added to a stack of old tires. That night this pile will be lit and become a major signal fire (*luminaria grande*).

The women then start up the center trail, while the men are divided into two groups and sent up on either the north or south trail of the mountain. Other stacks of tires are placed at the base of trails going up the mountain. Each individual is expected to carry one or two tires partway up the mountain to be piled at designated spots. The center of the pile is filled with grass and creosote gathered nearby. The stacks of tires are lit later in the evening when the participants start back down the mountain. The three trails with the fires form a rough burning cross that can be seen from all over the Mesilla Valley.

By 10:30 a.m. most participants have reached the summit of the mountain, and at 11:00 a.m. Mass is celebrated by the local priest or by the bishop at a chapel built for that purpose on top of the mountain. The Mass is followed by lunch.

After lunch everyone is supposed to make a *quiote* or walking stick that will be used on the way down the mountain. The *quiotes* are made of yucca stalks some of which were collected on the way up the mountain. However, years of harvesting during these annual pilgrimages have created a scarcity of native yucca on the mountain. This problem is solved by having a truckload of these stalks and bases hauled up the mountain for all to use. The day is spent making the *quiotes* and *coronas* (crowns). The ornamentation is made from the sotol and yucca roots. Traditionally, the leaves are pounded to produce string for tying the ornaments. Today many use string, tape or staples, short cutting the traditional ways. When the *quiotes* and *coronas* are finished, the men and women are painted: men receive two stripes (an inverted "V") down each side of their nose; women receive three dots, one on each cheek and one on the chin. Around 4 p.m., while there is still daylight, the women and children start their descent down the mountain. The men remain on the top until approximately one-half hour after sunset. After seeing the three large luminarias lit in front of La Casa del Pueblo in Tortugas, the large luminaria on top of the

mountain is lit by one of the captains. The men start down the three trails lighting the luminarias as they descend. During this time the women have been waiting at the base of the mountain at the large luminaria, which is lit by one of the captains when they see the luminaria lit on top of the mountain. The large luminaria at the base of the mountain serves as a signal fire and gathering point for the men coming down the three trails. When everyone is down the mountain and assembled to the satisfaction of the captains, they all proceed back to Tortugas in *dos y dos* fashion.

As the procession nears Tortugas, a large bonfire of yucca is lit in an area in front (east side) of La Casa del Pueblo. Led by singers and village elders, the procession circles the fire and proceeds to the doors of La Casa del Pueblo. The *Capitan de la Guerra* then knocks on the door with his *quiote*, but the door does not open. The procession then returns by means of a long circular route around the fire; again the door is knocked upon and still there is no answer. The whole process is repeated for the third and final time. This time, as the *Capitan de Guerra* knocks, the two doors of La Casa del Pueblo are swung open. The two lines of pilgrims then deposit their *quiotes* in two doorways. The placing of the *quiotes* in La Casa del Pueblo is an offering to Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe and indicates that they have made the trip up the mountain.

While the pilgrims are returning from the mountain, activity in the village becomes somewhat hectic. Women roll thousands of *albondigas* (little meatballs) for a traditional dish that will be served the following day. Men boil the bones from a butchered cow to provide the broth for cooking the meatballs. Dishes are washed, plans are laid by the mayordomos about individual responsibilities for the noon meal, and the church is cleaned. Around 9 p.m., after the procession is back and most of the meatballs are rolled, the *Ensayo Royal* (royal practice) is held in La Casa del Pueblo. The dancing lasts for approximately an hour and is open to the general public.

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Early picture of Los Indios. Courtesy Rio Grande Historical Collection, New Mexico State University.

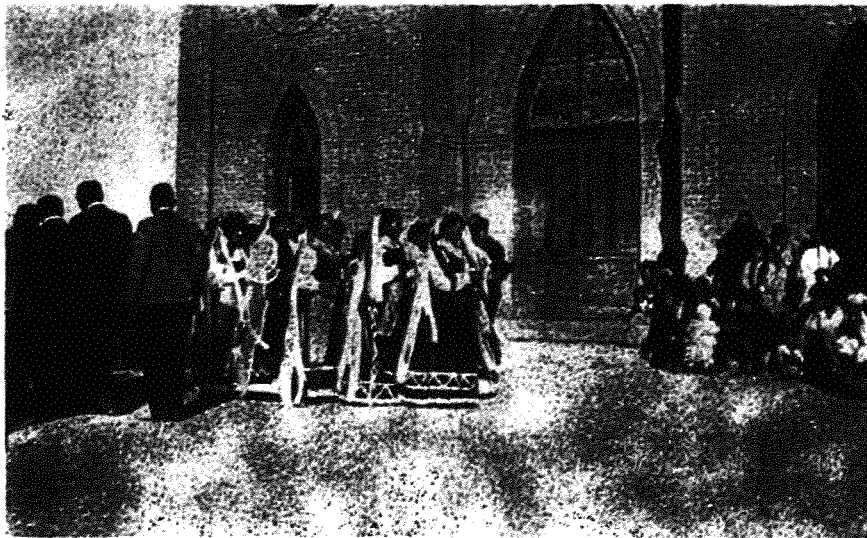
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Los Indios dancing. COAS Publishing & Research file photo.



Los Indios in front of St. Genevieve's, Las Cruces. COAS Publishing & Research file photo.



Los Indios dancing in front of St. Genevieve's, Las Cruces. Turn of the century. COAS Publishing & Research file photo.



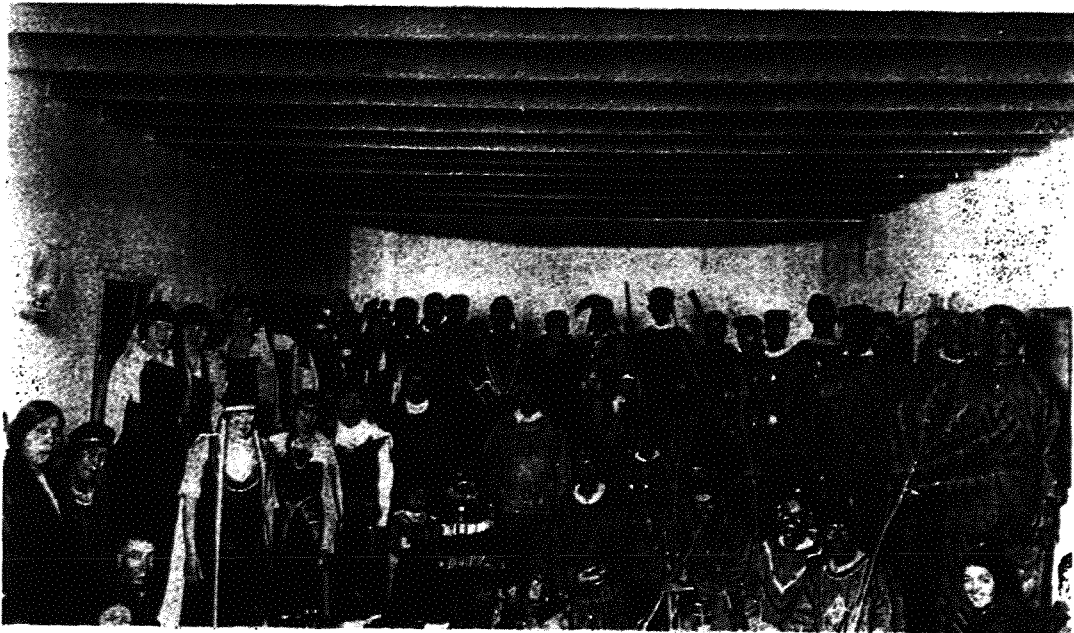
Los Danzantes in front of St. Genevieve's church. December 12, 1909. Courtesy Rio Grande Historical Collection, New Mexico State University.



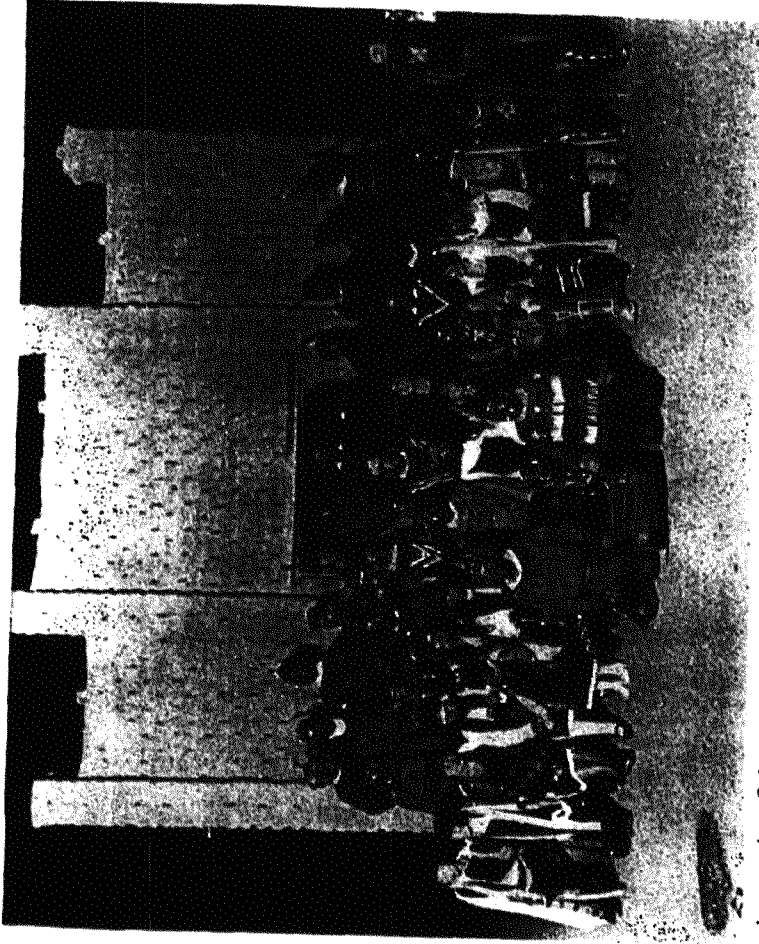
Early photograph of Los Danzantes. Location unknown. Courtesy Rio Grande Historical Collection, New Mexico State University.



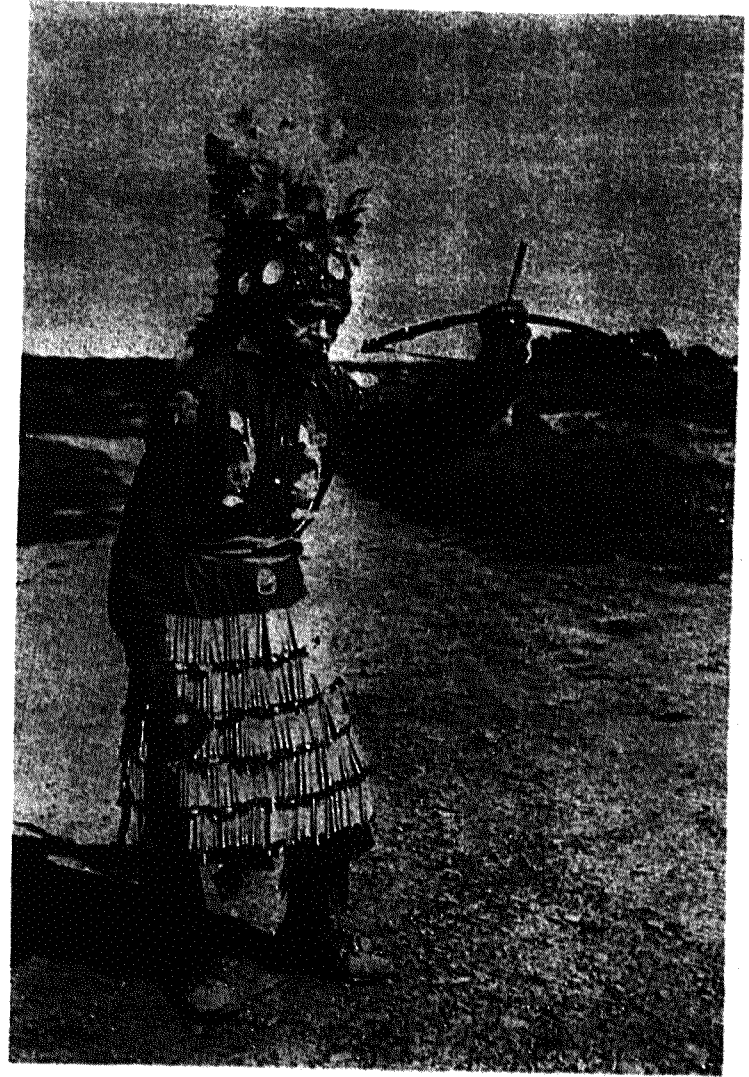
Los Danzantes in 1916. Photo handwriting is by Eugene Van Patten. Courtesy Rio Grande Historical Collection, New Mexico State University.



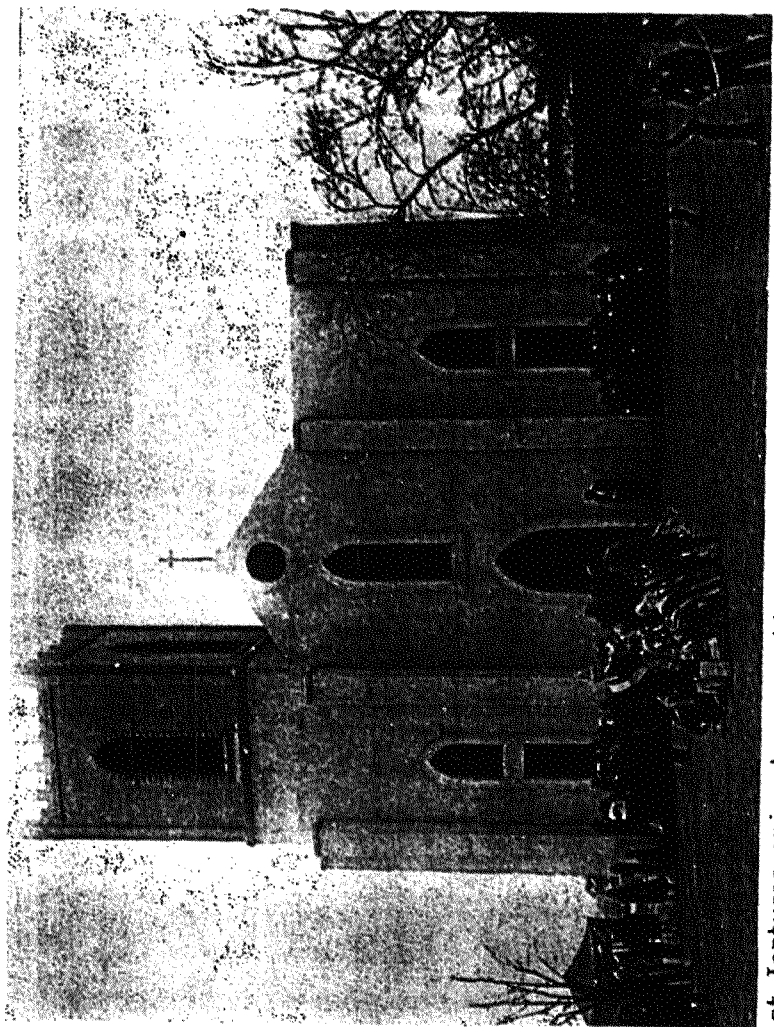
Los Indios inside "La Casa del Pueblo." Courtesy Rio Grande Historical Collection, New Mexico State University.



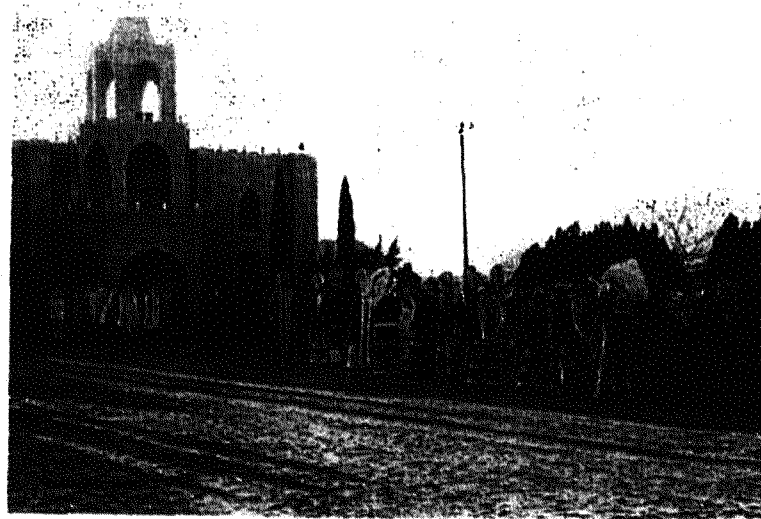
Early photograph of Los Indios in front of La Casa del Pueblo.
Rio Grande Historical Collection, New Mexico State University. Courtesy



Juan Pacheco in Los Aztecas dance costume.
Courtesy Rio Grande Historical collection,
New Mexico State University.



Church at Tortugas prior to renovation. Courtesy Rio Grande Historical Collection,
New Mexico State University.



Dance groups in front of Tortugas church,
December 12, 1977. Photo by Beckett



Los Danzantes dancing in front of the church,
December 12, 1977. Photo by Beckett



Removing the virgin from La Capilla the evening of December 10, 1978. Photo by Beckett



Los Indios facing the church during December 12, 1978 ceremony. Photo by Beckett



War Captains and singers on their way to the church in Tortugas December 12, 1977. Photo by Beckett



War Captains & Corporation officers in 1977. Front row l-r Andrea Ferrales, Mary Pena, Joe Ferrales. Back row l-r Ernesto Dominguez, Vicente Roybal, Margarito Fierro, Ignacio Pena, Patricio Gonzales. Beckett

About 6 a.m. on the morning of December 12th, activity starts in La Casa de Comida as the mayordomos, their relatives and friends begin preparations for the noon meal that will be served to everyone after the dancers, priests and other guests eat.

Formerly, a large mesquite wood fire on the south side of La Casa de Comida provided the coals for the fireplace and the two large cast iron pots in which the chile and *albondigas* were cooked. Now the pots are heated with natural gas, which eliminates the carbon monoxide gas that the burning coals produced in the kitchen area, simplifies the work, and allows an easier control of the cooking temperature.

At 9 a.m., a special High Mass is held in the Catholic church. After the Mass, the Pueblo Indians and Los Danzantes perform their dances in front of the church.

For the rest of the day, four sets of dancers perform in the vicinity of the church. The dance groups are Los Indios, Los Danzantes, Aztecas del Carrizo, and Guadalupana Azteca. Los Indios and Los Danzantes are the Corporation dancers. At 4 p.m. a procession begins from the church with the image of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe being carried by the four sets of mayordomos (sponsors) counterclockwise around the pueblo returning to the church. The procession is preceded by all four dance groups, each taking turns at paying homage to the image as the procession is moving.

A captain at the front of the procession draws a straight line across the road with his *vara*, bisecting La Casa del Pueblo. When the procession reaches this halfway mark it stops. The local priest makes a short speech, and the mayordomos for the following year come to the head of the image, and this year's mayordomos move to the rear of the image. This ritual signifies the change of sponsorship and the assumption of responsibilities for the coming year's fiesta. The procession then continues on to the church, where a rosary and benediction are given by the village priest.

After the church services, everyone proceeds to La Casa de Comida. Prior to 1985 a round dance, La Rueda was held on the west side of the building with everyone participating. The west door of La Casa de Comida is then opened and the new mayordomos give out drinks and *bizcochos* (wine cookies) to the adults and bags of candy to the children. After this informal get-together is over many people go back to La Casa del Pueblo for a series of dances where anyone can now dance as an *Indio* or *danzante*. This dance marks the end of the long three day ceremony.

A TIWA RABBIT HUNT

The Indians of Tortugas still hold a rabbit hunt at least once a year. The hunt serves as a tie to the old ways and functions as a community get-together for the various Pueblo families that are physically scattered throughout the local area.

The ceremony usually takes place during a weekend in January when the weather is usually cold and rabbit disease is at its lowest point for the year. Traditionally an odd number of rabbit hunts - one, three or five, is held during the year.

On Saturday night a ceremony called "tying of the rabbits" (*amarrada los conejos*) is performed by the *capitanes de guerra* (war captains) along with the *humero* (an important ceremonial person who is responsible for lighting and maintaining the ceremonial fire and smoke before the rabbit hunt) and the *cacique* (the ceremonial leader of the Pueblo).

According to custom, the *humero's* assistant is supposed to be the captain whose rank is equal to that of the actual hunt of the year (that is the first rabbit hunt equals the 1st captain). In the past, there used to be five rabbit hunts and each captain had his turn as the

humero's assistant. In actual practice today, one of the captains volunteers to be the assistant, and generally, only one rabbit hunt is held during the year. There have been occasional exceptions to this rule.

The actual rabbit hunt takes place on Sunday. Just before sunrise the *humero* and his assistant arrive at a remote location near old Fort Fillmore south of Las Cruces. The two men then proceed to build two fires, about 12 to 18 inches in diameter, which are orientated in a north-south direction from each other and are separated by about twenty feet. The northern fire is ceremonial in nature and is kept smoking throughout the early morning as a signal to the participants of the rabbit hunt; this smoke indicates the gathering place and start of the hunt. The southern fire is ceremonial in that it serves as a fire from which to light the northern fire and is functional because it is used for early morning warmth and to heat coffee. Fire taken from the southern hearth is applied to ceremonial corn husks and *amole* for kindling the northern fire, and this kindling is kept smoking by the placing of green saltbush and creosote bush on the little fire, which produces a large amount of smoke and is visible for several miles. According to tradition the *humero* must keep the green brush smoking and not allow any flames to break out. He does this by adding green brush to smother the flames and create more smoke.

As the participants arrive they pick some creosote or saltbush (saltbush being more traditional). Then they make a ceremonial cross of brush over the smoke from the ceremonial fire facing the direction in which the hunt is going to start. After making the cross, they place brush onto the ceremonial fire and the *humero* pushes the brush down into the fire with his rabbit stick. The rabbit stick is cut from a living mesquite with a steel ax or hatchet. Its traditional shape is somewhat like a very short hockey stick.

The distal end of the rabbit stick is usually left rough. The rough end of the stick is placed in the rabbit hole (*cueva*) and twisted around. If a rabbit is in the

hole, a quantity of fur will catch on the distal end of the stick indicating the rabbit's presence.

After most of the participants arrive, a ceremony takes place between the two fires; all of the war captains in order of their office (1st captain first, etc.) are switched once on each leg by the *humero*. Paint (red ocher) is then applied to each participant's face.

In order to be painted and be eligible for getting a rabbit, female participants must present the *humero* with a hand-rolled cigarette made from corn husks and pipe tobacco. Males and females are painted by the second captain: three dots of ocher are placed on the girls' and women's faces; one on each cheek and one on the chin. The men have two lines of red ocher placed on the bridge of their nose running diagonally across each cheek (like a upside-down "V").

When the hunt is to begin, the first captain orders the participants to the starting place. During this time, the *humero* carefully covers up the ceremonial fire by taking his rabbit stick and moving it to scrape up nearby dirt, making one scraping movement from each of the four compass directions. This procedure leaves the fire completely covered by a small mound of dirt which the *humero* tamps with his rabbit stick.

During the last twenty years the hunt area has grown smaller as new agricultural areas have been developed in the area. Usually the participants start moving in a westerly direction for about a quarter of a mile toward the Rio Grande Valley. The direction is then changed toward the south. A circle is not kept as such but a rather random movement of individuals takes place which causes the rabbits to begin running to escape. Once the rabbit is spotted, the hunters shout to confuse it and attempt to cut off the escape routes.

The rabbit is usually captured in one of three ways: (1) it is clubbed by a rabbit stick which can either be swung or thrown; (2) it is grabbed by hand; or (3) its

hole is dug out by shovel and someone reaches into the hole and pulls out the rabbit. The rabbit is killed by being struck with the hand or the rabbit stick. The older and more experienced hunters prefer the hand since many times the rabbit stick will decapitate the rabbit.

The hunter who kills the rabbit yells *howe!*. The first female participant to reach the hunter after hearing this signal will be awarded the kill. After the hunt is over, this female must present the hunter with two sweetbreads (*empanadas*) or four *sopaipillas* in exchange for the rabbit.

At noontime, the captains choose an eating place. By custom the *humero* sits at the head (northside) of the blanket so that he faces south. The first rabbit taken by each captain is saved as an offering for the *humero*. The captain gives the *humero* if he has no rabbit. The *humero* places the rabbits on his right side while the meal is being eaten.

All food brought by the captains is laid out on the blanket to be shared by those eating with the *humero*. It is customary for other participants to bring food for the *humero*. The food is then blessed. After the meal is finished, all food left on the blanket along with the rabbits belongs to the *humero*.

After lunch, the captains call for the hunt to resume. The afternoon hunt is usually very short, ending about 3:30 or 4:00 p.m. During the afternoon hunt, some males keep their rabbits to take home since most of the women have run out of *empanadas*. During a good day 75-100 rabbits are taken by 50 to 75 individuals.

SAN JUAN CELEBRATION

San Juan Bautista day has been celebrated in the Mesilla Valley since the 19th Century. By 1885 the holiday was widely celebrated by almost everyone in the Las Cruces vicinity (*Rio Grande Republican* 1885). The village of San Juan was originally called San Juan de Dios

according to the San Albino de Mesilla Baptismal records, but the feast day of Saint John the Baptist is the day celebrated.

Exactly when the San Juan fiesta in Tortugas originated is not currently known, but we do know that by 1883 Eugene Van Patten told Adolph Bandelier that:

On the night of St. John's Day (25 of June) the girls bathe in the acequia and then lie flat on the sand on their faces. An old woman then cuts off two inches from their hair with an instrument which is not to be sharp. (Lange & Riley 1970:158).

Cutting of the hair on San Juan day is a local Hispanic custom that is supposed to help keep the hair healthy.

By the mid-1930s two horse drawn wagons were placed together to form a stage on Tile Avenue between Tortugas and San Francisco drives. This is in the same block as the site of the proposed 1887 chapel. The stage was used as a platform for various kinds of entertainment (e.g., queen contest, musicians and speeches). Various kinds of food were sold during the fiesta, and young girls dressed as peace officers arrested and jailed participants, releasing them when they paid bail. In this way they raised money for the church (Fierro 1989).

By the 1950s the fiesta of San Juan was being held on the east side of the church. Men and women started cooking early in the morning on kerosene stoves. Enchiladas, chicken or barbecue were sold. R. Paz's Los Aztecas danced at 5 a.m. and then later in the afternoon. At 7 p.m. Los Indios left La Casa del Pueblo in a procession that traveled west on Guadalupe street and then danced on the east side of the church. They returned by going east on Juan Diego street and then danced on the east side of the Capilla.

Los Indios only dance at 7 p.m. on the 24th of June, an activity that occasionally coincides with the fiesta. In 1986 the fiesta became a two day event held on the nearest weekend to June 24th. Early Saturday morning

the finishing touches are put on the food and game booths. The general public usually starts arriving around 11 a.m., and the sale of food and beer and game playing commences around the same time. The tradition of female law officers jailing participants for money continues today. The afternoon and evening of both days have live entertainment and dancing.

Today Tortugas continues to preserve the varied traditions of its diverse historical origins.

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